

	<p align="center">Full Council 29 February 2024</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Corporate Director of Governance</p>
	<p align="center">Lead Member – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform (Councillor Shama Tatler)</p>
<p align="center">Members Allowance Scheme Annual Review 2024-25</p>	

Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Two Appendix 1: Members Allowance Cost Analysis Appendix 2: Dependant Carers & Parental Leave Policy (amendments)
Background Papers:	
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Amira Nassr, Head of Chief Executive & Member Services 020 8937 5436 Email: amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 A Members' Allowance Scheme, which sets out the allowances Members are entitled to receive for carrying out their responsibilities has to be made for the 2024-25 Financial Year.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Full Council

- 2.1 Considers and approves the Members Allowance Scheme in the proposed terms set out within this report for the 2024-245 Financial Year.
- 2.2 Authorises the Corporate Director of Governance to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 The Members' Allowance scheme contributes to the delivery of the Borough Plan priorities by reducing financial barriers to public service, so as to enable a wide range of people to become a councillor and be recompensed for the time they devote to their role and to the responsibilities they carry.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 Brent Council's Members' Allowance Scheme (which is included in the Council's Constitution at Part 6 and is published on the Council's website) was subject to full formal review at the Annual Council Meeting in 2018 and since then has been subject to ongoing annual review at each of the Council's budget setting meetings.
- 3.2.2 These reviews have been informed by the most recently available reports from the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for London Councils. The latest review and report undertaken by the IRP (entitled "[The Remuneration of Councillors in London 2023 – Report of the Independent Panel](#)") was published in December 2023 and followed an initial review undertaken in 2022. As noted in the report, the review aimed to seek wider consultation than previously, using qualitative and quantitative research to underpin its findings and recommendations.
- 3.2.3 This year's annual review has been based on the contents of this report, which will continue to inform the Council's decision-making in respect of its scheme for a maximum period of four years. It should be noted that whilst the Panel makes recommendations, each council determines its own remuneration scheme for its own councillors, having regard to the Panel's recommendations.
- 3.2.4 The 2023 IRP report recognises the importance of the role played by elected members not only in terms of their representational role but also given the increasing challenges and demands in managing the delivery of local services and on the allocation of financial resources. The report highlights the increasingly difficult and complex nature of choices and work faced by local councillors in terms of managing these challenges and increasing level of demand on services. In addition, reference is made to the growth in other public sector activities, increasing expectations for closer working with partners such as the health services and the voluntary sector, as well the growing role of councillors acting as a point of information, advice and reassurance for local communities. The report also recognises the increasing expectations of the public in terms of access to their local councillors supported by the growth in digital connectivity, social media etc. as well as the effects of the pandemic and the resettlement of refugees.
- 3.2.5 The report highlights the importance of allowances being pitched at an appropriate level so that they make a major contribution in ensuring diverse and effective local representation.

- 3.2.6 Over the period of May 2023 to date, councillors have logged over 5,500 Members Enquiries on behalf of their constituents, organised in the region of 200 surgeries and cumulatively attended over 500 council meetings.
- 3.2.7 Whilst considering the above factors, the Council must remain conscious of the financial challenges faced by local authorities.
- 3.2.8 It is for Full Council to make a scheme for the payment of allowances to its members specifying the amount of entitlement by way of basic allowance (which is mandatory) and other allowances (which are discretionary). Such a scheme has to be in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and the Council is required to have regard to the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).
- 3.2.9 The scheme will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Annual Uplift

- 3.2.10 Brent's Members Allowance Scheme states that Basic, Special and Civic allowances "shall be increased with effect from each April, by a percentage equal to the inflation pay award agreed as part of the Local Government Pay Settlement in the previous financial year, unless otherwise determined by the Council". In 2023, the decision was made to increase the basic allowance by 4.04% increasing it to £12,988 in line with that agreed as part of the National Joint Council Government Services pay agreement.
- 3.2.11 As outlined in the review report, this allowance continues to be lower than that paid by all local authorities in Scotland which is presently £20,0992 and similarly in Wales where the government-appointed commission set the basic allowance at £17,600 for members of local authorities with populations which are generally substantially lower than those of London boroughs. The basic allowance in Northern Ireland is £16,394. The Panel have recommended that the basic allowance should be increased to £15,960. This represents an approximate 22% increase to the current basic allowance in Brent.
- 3.2.12 On review of the recommendations made by the Panel and conscious of the reasons set out above, members are asked to consider the proposal to apply an uplift of 5% across Basic Allowances within the Member Allowance scheme for 2024/25. If this were to be agreed, it would mean an increase in the Basic Allowance from £12,988 to £13,637 (a difference of £649 for each of the 57 councillors).

Special Responsibility Allowances

- 3.2.13 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) have also been reviewed in line with Panel recommendations. Noting that some of the positions do not currently fall within the recommended percentage bands (i.e. the % of the Leader's allowance considered appropriate for the role) and more importantly, recognising the increased workload and scope of these positions, members

are also asked to consider a targeted increase to the SRAs for the positions of Chairs of the Brent Connects Area Consultative Forums and members of the Licensing Committee.

- 3.2.14 It is evident that the number of meetings and scope of work considered by members of the Licensing Committee has increased and in recognition of this, it is proposed that the SRA for this role increase from £1,040 to £2,068. This will bring the SRA within the median of the recommended percentage band.
- 3.2.15 Over the last two and a half years, the number of Licensing Sub-committee meetings have averaged at 20 or more per year with each hearing lasting at least half a day. Serving on the Licensing Committee bears significant personal responsibility as the committee is quasi-judicial in nature. All members are expected to strictly adhere to the Licensing code of practise, with the failure to do so risking reputational damage to the council or the risk of legal proceedings. All members on the licensing committee are expected to regularly attend the Licensing Sub-committee as well as undertake regular training and development sessions provided by the council, in addition to site visits and other applicable work.
- 3.2.16 Similarly with the role of Chairs of the Brent Connects Area Consultative Forums and the increasing pressures on community resilience and power, these forums will be taking on a more developed role in the council, as part of our Borough Plan commitment to enabling communities and encouraging greater involvement at a neighbourhood level in council activities.
- 3.2.17 At Cabinet in April 2023, a new approach to Community grants (formerly known as NCIL) was adopted. This new approach is predicated on a much more significant and time demanding role for Brent Connects Area Consultative Forums chairs.
- 3.2.18 The model proposes an allocation to each ward in the borough to be spent on a Brent Connect area basis, totalling £1m in this financial year, from the funds available to each Brent Connects area. Each Brent Connects area will make its own recommendations on projects to be funded. Brent Connects area panels will be convened to review all the applications within their Connect area using the same assessment criteria. Each Panel will consist of all Ward Councillors in the locality and will be chaired by the Brent Connects chairs. This additional responsibility will require a greater time commitment of each Brent Connects Chair, as part of our approach to develop and test new approaches that empower residents on a neighbourhood basis.
- 3.2.19 It is proposed that the SRA for this role increase from £1,301 to £2,068. This will bring the SRA within the recommended median percentage band as set out in the IRP report.
- 3.2.20 These figures are reflected in the cost analysis within Appendix 1 of the report.

- 3.2.21 Benchmarking with other councils has been carried out to be able to draw comparisons to inform decision making. Hounslow council have Chairs of area forums who receive an SRA of £7,990 and Wandsworth Council have Council Champions who receive £2,805.

Parental leave policy

- 3.2.22 The LGA have recently conducted a survey to obtain an overview of the extent to which councils have introduced parental leave policies for councillors, how well these are working, and how councils deal with issues such as allowances, attendance requirements and cabinet positions. The research undertaken will be used to inform future LGA policy on parental leave policies and potential lobbying of central government.
- 3.2.23 In the survey, it asked if the council made [Section 85](#) explicit in its maternity documents. We therefore propose amending the Dependants Carers Allowance policy within the Members Allowance Scheme, as shown in red (Appendix 2).

4.0 Publicity

- 4.1 As soon as reasonably practicable after the making or amendment of a Scheme, copies of the Scheme have to be made available for inspection at the Civic Centre and a notice has to be published in a local newspaper. It is recommended that the Corporate Director of Governance be authorised to comply with these requirements.

5. Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 5.1 The outcome of the annual review has been subject to consultation with members of the Constitution Working Group.

6.0 Financial Considerations

- 6.1 The actual overall cost of the payment of allowances depends on which Members are appointed to the roles where an SRA is received, as only one such allowance is payable irrespective of the number of roles held. At the end of each financial year, the payments made to each Member are published in accordance with statutory rules.
- 6.2 Any uplift to the allowance scheme will result in additional expenditure. A table illustrating this can be found at Appendix 1. In summary, the additional expenditure should the uplift and additional SRA be applied would be £57k.
- 6.3 The current budget for members' allowances is £1.16m. There is scope within the existing budget to absorb the additional expenditure, should this be agreed.

7.0 Legal Considerations

- 7.1 The Council's Members' Allowance Scheme must comply with the relevant provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003; the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 2000. In adopting or amending the scheme the Council is required to have due regard to the report published by its Remuneration Panel, which is the IRP appointed by London Councils.
- 7.2 The increase in the basic allowance for all members and in the Special Responsibility Allowances identified to be increased are consistent with the recommendations of The Remuneration of Councillors in London 2023 – Report of the Independent Panel, to which the council must have regard.

8.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 8.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have 'due regard' to the need:
- a) To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity; and
 - c) Foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.
- 8.2 This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 8.3 The purpose of the duty is to enquire into whether a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic. In other words, the indirect discriminatory effects of a proposed decision. Due regard is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances.
- 8.4 This report outlines the allowances for all Members for 2024-25. As the allowances are the same for all Members, irrespective of their background, there are no equality, diversity or inclusion implications for the proposals within this paper.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 9.1 None.

10.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 10.1 None.

11.0 Communication Considerations

- 11.1 None.

Report sign off:

Debra Norman

Corporate Director of Governance